

Same sex orientation and the homosexual identity in *Männerbund*: A comparative study of two distinct types of male homoeroticism in Mishima Yukio's works and in E.M. Forster's *Maurice*

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Both Mishima Yukio's *Confessions of a Mask* and E. M. Forster's *Maurice* depict a male protagonist's search for his homosexual identity. In Mishima's novel, the male protagonist "I" attends a boy's boarding school and is attracted to Omi, a senior student of the same school. The protagonist of the eponymous *Maurice* also falls in love with Clive, one of his schoolmates in the English public school they attend, and their love is fostered throughout their school years. However, after the two graduate, Clive marries a woman and tells Maurice that their relationship merely represented an intimacy between friends and not a homosexual affiliation. In contrast, Maurice finally acknowledges that he is innately homosexual and makes love with Alec Scudder, Clive's gamekeeper. The love between Maurice and Alec transcends two major obstacles of their contemporary English society: the class difference and the intolerance of homoeroticism; these obstacles may have resulted in the work's late publication after the author's death.

Clive's sexual orientation is similar to the historical Japanese idea of *nanshoku*, a term denoting same sex love in pre-modern Japan. This concept is akin to the English notion of pederasty, as it was practiced in male homosocial circumstances (*Männerbund*), such as boarding schools for boys, and was compatible with the heterosexual marital relationship. A similar sexual orientation is depicted in Mishima Yukio's *Forbidden Colors*, where an old, famous novelist called Shunsuke marries three different women but, because of his hatred and discrimination against women, later becomes attracted to Yuichi, a young, beautiful man. Shunsuke's sexual orientation is categorized as *nanshoku* rather than the modern idea of homosexuality because it is not innate, unlike Yuichi's natural homoerotic orientation. Yuichi confesses that he has never felt any sexual desire for women and identifies himself as an innately gay man, as does Maurice.

Mishima and Forster both distinguish an inborn homosexual orientation and instances of temporal intimacy between male friends influenced by the male homo-social circumstances in their works. Both authors wrote about male homosexual desire in real terms from the point of view of each of their male protagonists. The messages of their works are still effective in communicating to contemporary readers and audiences an understanding of the inner suffering caused by and the struggle against the social intolerance of same sex love.